

The New Old

A Post fashion Consumption Practice

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Table of Contents

Abstract	4
Acknowledgements	5
Chapter 1: Introduction	6
1.1 The goal	7
1.2 Data and method	
1.3 Execution / experimentation	
1.4 Chapter breakdown	8
Theoretical framework:	
Chapter 2: Data presentation on the used clothing situation in Asia	9
2.1 Interviews about the second hand clothing climate in the selective Asian cities	
2.2 The second hand clothing scene in Asia: An exploration on the why and why-not of the second hand clothing choices	12
Chapter 3: A background on the interest in renewing-old clothing and scrutinizing the design methodology	21
3.1 The influence from the past and of those internalized	
3.2 The design paradigm: Renew-old	
Chapter 4: Looking back to the second hand clothing trades in history, the European context: Second hand clothing trade in the Renaissance, Florence, Italy	23
Chapter 5: The current fashion and textile consumption setting	25
5.1 A background on the current fashion and textile consumption and wastage in the Nordic countries	
5.2 Implementation on cutting down fashion waste, the examples	26
5.2.1 Slow fashion	
5.2.2 Local wisdom	31
5.2.3 Re-use and reconditioning	33
5.2.4 The use of craft	34
5.2.5 Hacking and repairing fashion	35

Chapter 6: The comparison between recycled, DIY and renewed clothing & the assessment of values	38
6.1 The comparison between recycled, DIY and renewed clothing	
6.2 A comparison between recycled fashion labels and renewed clothing labels	42
6.3 An overview of different sets of value	44
Chapter 7: A clothing with biography	46
Chapter 8: The working	48
8.1 The goal and the expectations	
8.2 The findings from the past thesis papers	
8.3 The collecting	49
8.4 The execution / process	51
8.5 The analysis and conclusion	71
References	74
List of illustrations and figures	76
Bibliographies	78
Appendix:	
The designed 'design brief', the questionnaires	80
Repair manifesto	81

Abstract

The rapid changes of trend and style in fashion have inevitably caused clothing to become almost disposable, because staying current and 'new' is the motto. Subsequently, this fast-paced fashion phenomenon caused an abundance of fashion and textile wastage in general. And thus, the objective of this thesis work is to suggest a design framework to counteract this fashion phenomenon, and hoping to slow down its consumption. *The New Old*, as suggested by the title, is a paradox itself. It proposes 'renew-old' as a design strategy in addressing the issue of excessive textile and clothing consumption through the re-working of used garments.

This research was done in two segments. The first part consists of theories and data collected from four selected Asian cities: Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan, which includes questionnaires and interviews related to the used clothing culture in a particular city. This target group was chosen because the mentality of Asians in adorning used clothing is different from 'Westerners', usually related to taboos and perceptions affected by cultural, social, education and economic aspects. Hence, it was interesting to seek the differences between Asia and Europe in this aspect, where the Western culture shows such a great acceptance in wearing second-hand clothing. Besides, renew-old also have been discussed in a more detailed manner and comparison has been made with other seemingly similar yet different fashion terminology such as 'recycle' in order to distinguish the positioning of renew-old. Renew-old is thought of as an upcycling process in this research context.

The second segment of the research was the actual renewing process from the used garments, contributed by the interviewees from the aforementioned Asian cities. The aim of the final execution was to demonstrate the possibilities of renewing-old garments and to put them into practice. Three approaches have been realised in each of the wearable, in which all the used clothing have been 'assessed' and segregated into parts before 'mixing' them together during the renewing process. Eventually, these renewed outfits were sent back to its owners, where they obligatorily 'own' a bit of something from another stranger of another city, which is almost similar to the action of buying second-hand clothing.

Keywords:

renew-old, redesign, second-hand clothing, upcycling, excessive fashion consumption, wearable/non-wearable art, Asia, sustainable fashion industry, handmade, craft

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis explores the subject of renewing-old with a context that is clothing specific, and intends to seek the possibilities of slowing down clothing and textile consumption by the means of renewing used garments. It is a response towards my research question of how to counter the fast paced disposable clothing consumption habit that has caused much material wastage in everyday life. As a demonstration to this, this 'renewing-old' process will be exercised by requesting used garments contributions from selective individuals in Asia. The reason that Asian cities have been selected was because a majority of Asians still preserve a rather conservative mindset towards wearing used clothing. Nevertheless, this aspect will be an intriguing process in the renewing process. The subject of Asians and their second-hand clothing cultures will be further explored in Chapter 2.

'Renew-old' is ideally thought to be a way to sustain the 'life' of our wardrobe in the fashion context by having ever renewing clothing from the old ones, and indirectly reduce fashion consumption. Throughout the renewing exercise, the agenda is also to add 'values' to the used garments so that they can be owned again, and also in the hope that their life span can be prolonged, although this might just be presumably correct. Renewing-old is not just a physical practice but an attitude towards life. In the renewing-old process, we could see an overlapping of histories (of the garments). The appearances of the garments can be changed, but the histories cannot be altered. However, the context/identity may shift from one owner to the other, as similar as the theory of Kopytoff (1986) in his article, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', which touched on the transformation of identity within a commodity. This is one of the aspects that intrigued this project.

The beginning of the thesis will provide a background on the second hand clothing consumption in certain selected Asian cities, which emphasises certain taboos and pre-conceptions of Asians towards wearing used clothing, assumably influenced by their education, social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Therefore, during the execution of renewing the old garments, the parts of clothing from different owners will be purposely mixed and renewed, after which they are going to be sent back to the previous owner. It might be quite a literal attempt to 'mix' the identities of different clothing/owners, but symbolically it is an arrangement of a 'meeting' between different strangers on a particular piece of garment.

1.1 The Goal

This thesis is aimed to explore the possibilities of cutting down clothing and textile consumption through the practice of renewing-old clothing. Therefore, by carrying out a series of research related to used garments in the historical, cultural and social backgrounds within a fashion context, its ultimate motive is to devise a design framework in renewing-old clothing and proposing ideas on how this could be done, hopefully in a way that is not dissimilar to that of recycling. So to speak, it is an eagerness to look for an alternative visual language of its own through the making, styling and photo shooting. By renewing clothing from the Asian contributors, this specific renewing-old project aspires to move away from the taboo about wearing used clothing in the Asian context.

1.2 Data and Method

The resources of this research will be gathered from physical books, online books, past thesis papers and e-journals. Nevertheless, the data from the used clothing contributors are planned to be collected through interviews and questionnaires, which will be done online via email and Facebook as they are all residing in Asia. There will be questionnaires to understand the used clothing culture in the individual's home country, although some questions might be slightly fine-tuned based on some of the differences found in their second hand clothing cultures.

Subsequently, these contributors from four different Asian cities: Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan will be requested to send their used garments for renewing through post. A more detailed understanding of the data collection matter will be presented in Chapter 2 whereas a more in-depth understanding of the working procedures and the final processes will be discussed in the last chapter.

1.3 Execution/ experimentation

The collection of data is an important reference for the renewing works. Once the used garments arrive safely from the contributors overseas, the final stage of this research work will begin, that will be a series of hands-on experiences on renewing the used garments themselves. The packages received will be documented as part of the process, and likewise for each and every single piece of

the garment. The clothing will then be 'assessed' and segregated into parts before the renewing process by mixing these parts together. There are three different approaches in the renewing process, which also set the distinctions in terms of appearance and concept of the working. Eventually these renewed outfits will be sent back to the previous owner, where they obligatorily own a bit of something from another stranger of another city.

1.4 Chapter Breakdown

This thesis research has seven chapters altogether. After the introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 is a data presentation on the used clothing situation in Asia. A series of interviews will also be conducted on the selected individuals from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Japan. The motivation of this interview is trying to find out the average consumers' point of view in acquiring used garments, thus providing a basic design background in approaching the method of 'renew old' in the later stage. Chapter 3 is discovering the 'root' of interest in renewing-old clothing, and a further study on this design methodology, while Chapter 4 will be looking into the history and trade of secondhand clothing in Europe (Florence, Italy) dated as early as back in the Renaissance era.

In Chapter 5, the focus will be on the current fashion and textile consumption setting in the Nordic countries. This chapter will present the studies about existing practices that have been implemented for a more sustainable fashion practice. Later on it will be followed by the comparison between recycled, DIY and renewed clothing in Chapter 6. After which there will be another specific comparison between a selected recycled fashion label and renewed clothing label. The comparisons are deemed to provide a general view on the positioning of renewing-old in the fashion context. After which, the subject about different values is going to be discussed at the later part of Chapter 6.

In the following chapter, we look into Kopytoff (1986)'s theory on his writing, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', where he talked about the evolving identities within a commodity, which is almost similar to a piece of second hand clothing that is worn and owned by more than one individual. Finally, the execution process of 'renewing-old' will be examined through a series of documentation in Chapter 8. Hereafter, it will be concluded with an analysis and conclusion.

Chapter 2: Data presentation on the used clothing situation in Asia

The first association with second hand clothing in my personal experience was during the late 1990s. I discovered a marketplace that sold second hand items, mostly denim and T-shirts in this seemingly 'dangerous' district in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. That was an intriguing encounter, because acquisition of the new is the norm and a common practice in everyday life, and yet, these used items seem to have some charm that arouse curiosity in their haphazard assortments and ways of being displayed at that local street stall setting.

Being born in South East Asia and lived there for half of my life thus far, we understand that material possessions reflect one's social status and well-being in this material driven society. The most prominent association is through the 'endorsement' of brand names used in everyday products such as automobiles, household goods, furniture and clothing. Among all, clothing has directly portrayed an image of an individual, especially at striking the first impression. However, the use of second hand items is not common practice between strangers or acquaintances, but it could happen within the same family, or even among relatives. For instance, items such as clothing, books or toys can be passed down to younger siblings or between cousins. Other than that, the implications of the used items are taboo, connected with the deceased, poverty and sloppiness. These used items might associate oneself with a certain social hierarchy that they do not wish to be associated with.

2.1 Interviews about the second hand clothing culture in selective Asian cities

This section of the research is based on literature and interviews. Due to different geographical locations, a set of questionnaires have been sent to different individuals residing in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Japan through online mediums such as email and Facebook. There are valid reasons in selecting these four Asian countries. First of all, Hong Kong and Japan (Tokyo) were selected because they are the two major fashion pilgrimage area in the region, while Singapore and Malaysia, both located in the South East of Asia share different vibrancy of fashion scenes, having the tendency to incline towards the aforementioned cities for inspiration in terms of fashion trends.

The data was collected from the total amount of fifteen interviewees across these four cities, in which six of them are from Singapore, five from Malaysia, three from Japan and one from Hong Kong. This limitation of quantity was because the investigation was aiming to reach local people's opinions about used clothing, and further analysed the situation within the context of their immediate environments, and making a comparison in general. Due to the convenience of social media tools, the interviewees were approached via email as well as Facebook communication. The selected personnel are mostly people I know, and also a few from Singapore are friends of the person I contacted. To 'round up' people who are not total strangers as interviewees has made the conversations more at ease and truthful. They are all general consumers with diverse social profiles. Their ages range from 25 to 45, and come from different walks of life, which I unofficially segregated them into individual who works in the creative or non-creative industry. Nevertheless, this categorization is not a discrimination, but is based on experience, observation and the data collected, people who work in the creative industry (in Asia) are more open to wearing second hand clothing. The list of questions presented to the interviewees in Japan, Malaysia and Singapore are the same, and only the set for Hong Kong is slightly different due to the more in-depth background research on its second-hand clothing culture and history. The interview questions are mainly focusing on their opinions related to the matters of second-hand clothing and its use in their daily life, and to get to know the local used clothing trade based on their understanding, knowledge and perception. As each of the individual is a unique entity, the diverse answers to the same questions are found to be interesting. However, in general, the answers from the Singapore interviewees have a shared similarity, which could be due to their tertiary education or professional background that is related to the creative field. Meanwhile, the individuals who answered the same set of questions in Malaysia has given different views on the used clothing phenomenon in their immediate environments, which are based on their own knowledge and perception on the acceptance of society towards second-hand garments as a whole. Three of the interviewees from Japan are avid second-hand clothing shoppers, though they may have slightly different agendas in purchasing used clothing, all of them thought that going into the second hand clothing stores is similar to that of a treasure hunting. Lastly, the only interviewee in Hong Kong has provided positive, yet personal remarks about used clothing. Next, these are the list of interview questions for the selected personages in Singapore:

The Questions:

- 1) What is your opinion about wearing second hand/ used clothing?
- 2) Do you think it is a taboo to wear used clothing? For example: filthy, related to the dead people, looks poor... etc.
- 3) Do you mind wearing second hand/ used clothing? Why?
- 4) Do you own any second hand clothing? If you do, what sort of clothing are they? Why did you buy them?
- 5) Do you have any idea when did the second hand clothing started to gain their popularity in Singapore? Or if you think they are never popular?
- 6) Why do you think people (in Singapore) wear second hand clothing? Who are they?
- 7) Do you think the medias influence the decisions of consumers to shop for second hand clothing?
- 8) From your opinion, do the consumers in Singapore prefer new merchandise (purchased from the departmental stores or boutique) than used clothing from a second hand shop?
- 9) Are there any Salvation Army or charity shops? Are they popular?
- 10) What is your opinion about wearing second hand clothing as a fashion trend, or fashion statement? Or more for practical reasons, such as comfort and economics?

2.2 The second hand clothing scene in Asia: An exploration on the why and why-not of the second hand clothing choices

The selection of interviewees from different professions is due to the hypothesis that decision-making is affected by the social and cultural factor, as well as the general state of the national economy. Besides, different education backgrounds also form our thoughts diversely. Gibbons & Reimar (1999) articulated about the expressivist lifestyle in postmodernity. This lifestyle is a flux and the choices made are not linear, as many of the young people nowadays do not grow up in a traditional family, and unlikely to work at where their parents have worked (Gibbons & Reimar, 1999, p.75). The authors also stated that this presentation of oneself could be expressed through appearance, action, and products. Nevertheless, the decisions and choices made to build these 'individualities' are still based on their social and cultural contexts. (Gibbons & Reimar, 1999, pp.74 & 78-79.) Therefore, the relationship between consumption and lifestyle where the choices are bounded by the personal cultural and social context is indelible. This could also indicate that, the decision in adorning used clothing in one's context of life has to do with their immediate environments, which is still socially grounded, albeit the sense of individuality is still in search. Apart from that, each individual's taste is also socially and culturally defined¹.

On the other hand, the appreciation towards second-hand clothing is also marked by the distinction in culture value, especially between Asians and Westerners. Nevertheless, having said that, there are even 'gaps' found between individuals who live in different Asian cities as well. They may have shared some common opinions towards second hand clothing, which could briefly be summed up as: retro/ vintage, unique design, designer piece, good workmanship and durable materials. Nevertheless, the majority of the people do not wear second hand clothing as new clothing are much more affordable and shopping outlets are also much more accessible than before.

In Malaysia, wearing second hand clothing is hardly popular. It is definitely based on the personal recognition on what 'second hand clothing' means. The country is divided into thirteen states, with two capital cities each in the East and West Malaysia. Most of the states are not as developed as the capital cities, and even in the capital city, Kuala Lumpur itself, to access a second hand clothing store is not easy as they are usually located outside of the commercial area, and far out from the city centre. The interviews also found out that those who rarely practice or have never worn second hand clothing are most likely to connect the meaning of second hand clothing to the environment or economical reasons. The used clothing are for the needy and "should be given away free for charity", as these clothing are no longer wanted, said one of the interviewees from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. However, there are also opinions stating that wearing second hand

clothing is a fashion statement². Like the aforementioned, there are people who are looking for the retro style, but this segment of the consumers is specific and niche.

In a nutshell, wearing second hand clothing in Malaysia could easily being perceived as having lower social status as the used clothing are normally donated to the less fortunate, or disaster victims. As a matter of fact, Malaysia is still a developing country. Citizens who live in this social economic condition cultivate different mindsets as compared to those who live in the developed countries. Hence, it is hypothetically correct that the way a Malaysian perceives second-hand clothing is deem to be different from someone who lives in Hong Kong.

There was a more detailed research found concerning the second-hand clothing history and culture in Hong Kong, as Hong Kong is one of the major fashion hubs in Asia. Clark (2005) pointed out that fashion consumption in Hong Kong was caused by the search for authenticity due to the 'handover' in 1997, while coinciding with the powerful impact of global fashion. This phenomenon of wearing second hand clothing was a manifestation of choices through fashion consumption, and "demonstrating choices that had been denied to them historically in their self-determination." (Clark, 2005, p.160.) Clothing was a substitute that provided a form of empowerment to the Hong Kong people who lacked a voice in government and parliamentary matters. Nevertheless, Clark (2005) also stated that these used garments were for the poor and needy prior to this social change, and there was a superstition rooted among the authentic Chinese, which associated them with the deceased and the hardship for the economy (Clark, 2005, p.155). In the article, she indicated that the local women were still wearing the Chinese traditional fitted style dress, cheongsam, and both men and women were wearing the samfu before the 1960s. To own a piece of 'Western' clothing from the international fashion dictatorship of the USA and Europe scene was thought of as fashionable. This phenomenon has subsequently provided evidence on the people's high value and desire on Western style clothing. (Clark, 2005, p.157.)

However, the used clothing consumption pattern has changed during the 1960s when the clothing industry started to bloom. Clark (2005) pointed out that this phenomenon happened because the standard of living had improved. Hence, the majority of the citizens in Hong Kong did not need to wear second hand clothing anymore. In addition, Western style clothing was already more accessible. It was also the period when a local brand with a foreign sounding name, Giordano, gained its success. Meanwhile, international fashion brands such as Versace, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada and Gucci were also getting popular among the nation. (Clark, 2005, p.157.)

The article also stated that there was a group of more 'elitist' used garments shoppers during the 1990s that were from the higher income base and those of the fashion conscious. One of their activities was to buy used pieces sold or auctioned by celebrities in Hong Kong³. They bought those used garments and hoped that the monetary value will increase. Meanwhile, the fashion conscious would travel to the neighboring city, Shenzhen, to purchase imitations of branded goods or as far as California to purchase vintage clothing. (Clark, 2005, pp.165-166 & 168.)



Figure 1. A second hand clothing store owned by a Hong Kong celebrity, Kelly Chen

The aforementioned aspects based on Hong Kong's historical perspective on second hand clothing are probably the reasons that cause the difference in perceived values towards used clothing as compared to Malaysia. Nevertheless, this set of value is much similar to the consumers in Tokyo, Japan.

In Tokyo city, wearing second hand clothing is a fashion trend and statement. The popular culture is very much influenced by American culture and ironic enough, Japanese fashion and popular culture scenes are one of the major influences towards other Asia cities such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and so forth. According to Clark, the second hand garments buyers in Hong Kong back in the 1990s already started to import second hand clothing from Japan (Clark, 2005, p. 163).

In Tokyo, the merchandise in the second hand clothing stores are mostly curated. The selections are specific and cater to the needs and preferences of the youth. However, It is unlikely a economical outlet for clothing shopping, because the items are not exactly cheap as what one may think a second hand clothing should worth. In fact, the interviewees had expressed that they do not know of any charity shops exist in the city, but mainly shops that sell second hand items, which

they describe as 'vintage'. One of the interviewee, Miyu Kuno claimed that vintage clothing in Japan are considered high fashion, and feature in famous fashion magazines such as So-en. Nevertheless, there are also other outlets to sell and buy used items, such as Yahoo auction, but the items are not limited to vintage only.



Figure 1.1 A popular Japanese magazine, SO-EN



Figure 1.2 WEGO, one of the biggest second hand clothing chain stores in Tokyo



Figure 1.3 Vintage clothing store like this is a norm in the retail scene in Tokyo

In general, the group of people who wear used clothing in Tokyo is still considered niche. They are mostly individuals from the creative and artistic industry, or have an interest in fashion. They prefer the exclusion that a used clothing can provide, which is the one-of-the-kind garments that will not be seen in the market or on the street. As for the majority, they still opt for the new merchandise purchased from the departmental stores or boutiques. They might prefer the status of a brand, and greatly influenced by the media and glossy fashion magazines. Moreover, the mass produced clothing are much affordable nowadays, and the trend conscious consumers can easily get a similar outfits that they see from the media worn by the celebrities. The hygienic aspect does not seem to be an issue in buying used clothing in Tokyo, because the second hand clothing in Japan looks clean, according to one of the interviewees from Tokyo. The interviewees also claimed that they have different shopping experiences in shopping for second hand clothing than purchasing from a fashion outlet, each time is almost like a treasure hunt because you do not know what to expect. There is no trend indication and no seasonal collections, but you might even pull out an unique piece that transcends any season and lasts for years. Quoted from one of the interviewee, "Used clothing[s] gives me different direction of taste." This is an interesting statement as it shows an alternative opinion how it differs from the taboo that may have rooted among the more superstitious bunch.

On the other hand, Singapore as a young city since its independence in 1965 has a different consumption habit as compared to Hong Kong, Japan and Malaysia. Singapore managed to exit from labour-intensive industrialization to an increasingly service-based economy in such a short period of time, has proven a rapid economic growth, the adaptability of the citizens towards the changes that progress may bring, and also had brought the expansion of wages. "The expansion of income has primed Singapore for an expansion in consumption, leading to the emergence of a

loosely-organised 'culture of consumerism'." (Chua, 2003, pp. 17-18.) And indeed, this discourse from the economy growth was just natural, for consumption is not just for utility, but different meanings also embedded in the (no) brand names of the goods they use (Chua, 2003, p.18 & 21).

During the investigation about the second hand clothing culture in Singapore, a distinction was mentioned: the throw-away/ give-away/ unwanted sort of used clothing, and those of selected and sourced from other countries like the USA. The charity outlet, Salvation Army is not a 'trendy' place to look for second hand clothing. In fact, these outlets are more for furniture sourcing. Their locations are further away from the city centre, even though public transport is convenient in Singapore, there is still a bit of hassle to travel there.

Second hand clothing is definitely not a mainstream consuming culture in Singapore. An effort has to be made in order to organise flea markets at so-called hyped up locations such as clubs, cafes or open spaces outside malls and so forth. The vendors also need to pay rental fee for the spaces, which explain the higher price point of these second hand items as compared to the flea markets in Europe. Furthermore, selling at the flea market is more seen as an activity of youths, as they are habitually clearing off their exploded wardrobes due to the lack of space, with clothing bought from perhaps Bangkok, Hong Kong or blog shops. The qualities of these clothing are varied as well.

It was said that the tendency of wearing second hand clothing started since 1990s, according to one of the interviewees from Singapore. However, it was not exactly a trend to wear second-hand clothing back then. "If I recall an observation, it was in the early millennia that small indie stores popped up and became slightly coveted and sustained quietly through the years.", said interviewee Darren Ng.

People would not want to wear a used garment, for the reason that they have been worn before, and most likely they are stained. Nevertheless, this is also one of the reason people love about second hand clothing, for this seasoned and worn out aesthetics. "I bought them because there is that worn-off, seasoned and yellowing that is rare to buy fresh off the shelves." Darren Ng said.

This second hand clothing trend in Singapore was influenced by the hardcore music culture (mostly influence from the US) during 1990s. These hardcore, punk bands or poor kids who could not afford to buy new clothes and so they frequent the charity stores, and pull off a look which has become iconic to the street fashion at that time, hence had also influenced many others. The popular culture is always a great influence in fashion and youth's life. (Chua, 2003, p.24.)



Figure 1.4 A photo documentation from a previous project, taken at a thrift market in Singapore

Apart from the second hand clothing in those ad hoc flea markets, the second hand clothing in Singapore also comfortably fall under the category of 'vintage'. There are various reasons in wearing vintage pieces, besides the good workmanship that is probably hard to achieve in the current disposable fashion system. Nowadays fashion clothing produced in high volume and speed in order to catch up with international fashion trends, at the same time, the workmanship and quality of goods are declining as well. "Furthermore, the malls are always [chockful] with people. Human traffic is horrendous, and queues for the changing room can be very time consuming." This is one of the valid reasons given by the interviewee, Mary, to opt for an alternative second hand clothing shopping. Just like other interviewees, she does not mind wearing second hand clothing. In fact, she is an avid second hand clothing shopper, constantly trying to express herself through the one of a kind garment that she found from random flea markets, thrift stores, or while travelling in other cities such as Bangkok or Hong Kong. The search for one of the kind, the 'only me owning this particular design' mentality could be a revolt feeling towards the mass fashion in the market as well, especially those who looks for exclusivity in dressing and self-expression.

The vintage clothing business is not a mainstream venture in Singapore either, although this trend is getting more prominent and yet it is still a niche fashion market. The locations of most of these

vintage outlets are within the city centre. However, they are still not easy to find as they are not in the main shopping district. In these vintage select stores, one could find items sourced from Europe, America or Japan, with thoughtful shop interior decoration to set the mood that could bring you back to a particular nostalgic era. It is an enjoyable shopping experience as much as checking out the variety of items ranging from the 1920s to 1980s, and also other rare finds such as a “kitschy apple-red satchel with a phone receiver for a handle and push buttons.”, or a “1920s translucent red flapper dress featuring a delicate veiny pattern and a khaki Thierry Mugler pencil-skirt suit from the 1980s with metal chains draped all over it.” (Tan, The New York Times, 2013.) And it seems that Japan is a good place to import and source for second hand clothing, because “the waists of those Japanese vintage dresses are normally just above the natural waistline, which make the figure looks taller.” Said the owner of World Savage (Tan, The New York Times, 2013).



Figure 1.5 The shop interior of World Savage, Singapore

The love for vintage pieces is subjective. According to the shop owner of another vintage clothing outlet, Granny’s Day Out, her very first customer was horrified to hear that those dresses she tried were ‘old’. But those days were gone, although occasionally she still encounter customers who have foul opinions about these used clothing.

In a nutshell, the superstition is still there among the citizens: the taboo of wearing second hand clothing where the original source is unknown, or worn by whom, or if this person has passed away. Nonetheless, it is still a taboo even if the owners are still alive. Therefore, the ‘newness’ is still the preference in general. The changing of trends and the ‘turnover’ of new products in a city like Singapore is too quick, and yet it also fits into the pace of living of this nation. There is also a tendency that people go for online shopping for they are given more choices, and out of convenience. They might be shopping from blog shops or online stores such as ASOS, Urban Outfitters, Forever21 and so forth. Besides, it is easy to fly to destinations such as Bangkok with the low fare budget airlines, where people could shop for cheap clothing from the wholesale

markets in that city. These factors have greatly encouraged people to buy new and yet still affordable clothing.

In Singapore, media such as fashion magazines still play a role in 'promoting' vintage clothing. Singapore has always been a modern city, however the 'retro' and 'nostalgic' mood is favoured by fashion stylists and is spread throughout the glossy fashion magazines. Of course, there are people who wear them out of necessity as well, especially for the less fortunate families or those who have no budget for new clothing. There are also cases like wearing passed down clothing from siblings or relatives, for the value of a specific item. However, one interviewee pointed out that the majority of the Singaporean families belong to the middle class tier, so the economical reason is not really the case for a Singaporean to adorn second hand clothing.

"You can tell, from the ridiculous leather vests, and fur vests some of them don in the hot weather in Singapore. It is practically impossible to survive an hour in the heat yet they wear them. So, it's pretty obvious where we stand." Said Mary, an illustrator from Singapore.

Notes

1. This understanding was based on "The Sense of Distinction", from Pierre Bourdieu's 'Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste'
2. As wearing used clothing is not a norm in Malaysia, so to adopt this style would have been turned into a fashion context in seeking individuality and identity, if not for the economic reason.
3. On the other hand, at the other side of the globe, at different timing, Oprah also auctioned her shoes and handbags on ebay in her charity work to raise fund and create awareness. (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011)

Chapter 3: A background on the interest in renewing-old clothing and scrutinising the design methodology

It started from a dilemma, in the name of love for designing, creating and making clothes, but with a heart that is skeptical with the system that encapsulates the industry. And therefore, with this research subject; it was the upbringing process, the rooted culture and family values which have contributed to the 'set' of appreciation that is still running in my blood. Every single detail of life happens with a reason, and so here could be the brief history of how this interest in renewing-old happened.

3.1 The influence from the past and of those internalised

Coming from a family background where I see no chance of wasting even a single remnant piece of fabric, we subconsciously made do with things that we had around us, and to improvise (without any training) with them due to the lack of resources. And this has forced oneself to be creative and innovative in managing materials, and to find solution within a limitation. I see this as a virtue in everyday life, and to be kind with the surrounding that is already full of wastage and things. However, fashion has done the opposite, for fashion consumption is contributing 13.1 million tons of textile disposal annually ("US textile waste growth", September 5, 2012). Meanwhile in UK, the statistic estimated that almost 75% of the textile products become landfills at their end-of-life (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 63). This phenomenon has no means to be ecological, and perhaps not even ethical if the production processes might have involved different kinds of exploitation in workers' welfare. This further explains the rationale of taking up this research topic of renewing old.

3.2 The Design Paradigm: Renew-old

A design paradigm has been suggested in order to handle this research issue. Meanwhile, the genuine culture of every cultural background has always been reminded as the fundamental, as well as to upkeep the everyday life virtue. And thus, *The New Old*, is 'formatted' as an experimental research and practical process in aiming to explore the fashion/ clothing consumption phenomenon based on personal data gathered from the individual used garment contributor. It also

studies the significance and the social context of used clothing, and embedding new value and meaning to the old clothing.

Renew-old is a solution with strategy in mind, it is a method, an upcycling process to change the status quo of the object to an improved state while recycling has different agenda in the process of the material itself. According to the Oxford dictionary, 'recycle' is to convert waste into reusable materials. Thus, this has already distinguished 'recycle' from 'renew'. 'Renew-old' is a praxis of making do with existing objects, it deals with not only the materials but also involves behavioral change, and developing a different set of aesthetic value. It is a practical way to deal with the abundance of goods in everyday life, and it does not return to the previous stage, but aiming to push the meaning of the commodities to a different level, thus it is an upcycle process.

Recycle is a process with material as focus. I would say that recycling is an execution in itself, the re-application of old materials without emotional involvement, whereas renew-old takes into consideration the social/ cultural background of the users, in creating different visual language(s) from the typical interpretation of 'recycled fashion'. Furthermore, renew-old gives the possibility of extending products' shelf life through value adding. Theoretically this longevity may help the users to establish an emotional attachment towards it.

Chapter 4: Looking back to the second hand clothing trades in history, the European context: Second hand clothing trade in the Renaissance, Florence, Italy

The habit of consuming second hand goods operates differently in Western society based on my observation as a foreigner through living experience, and being an avid second hand clothing consumer. The phenomenon of acquiring second hand items in the West is 'liberating' in a sense, without apprehension and prejudice towards pre-used items, which sets them free from taboos and negative associations. And this helps to push the cycle and flow of existing goods in the social environment. This attitude has indicated a different 'school of thinking' in terms of social, culture and education aspects. Besides, the historical background might have accustomed people to this behavior as well.

The history of second hand clothing trade in Europe can be traced as early as back in the renaissance time in different cities in Italy. The second hand clothing dealers in each city were named differently: in Bologna they were called *regattieri*, in Venice they were named *strazzaruoli*, whereas *rigattieri* was how they were addressed in Florence (Frick, 2005, p.14). They all belonged to the retail guild of second hand clothing, household linens, cloth and related item of cloth that was first formed in 1266 (Davidsohn, 1956, cited in Frick, 2005, p.14).

The second hand clothing business started to flourish in Florence during the renaissance era, and had played an important aspect for the city's economy growth. Frick (2005) described that the formal designation for the used-clothing dealers' guild was *Arte de' Rigattieri e Linaiuoli* by 1280, and that *rigattieri* had significant positions in the city's industry, because cloth was a luxury, which was only meant for the rich. Nevertheless, with their social functions in selling used clothing at a lower price, a normal household could also own a piece at an affordable price as well. Although the social importance of *regittieri* was ranked as a minor, some of these merchants had done well and made a great fortune out of it. (Frick, 2005, pp.14 & 16-17.)

Nonetheless, the roles of *rigattieri* must not be confused with the rug dealers', and the difference must be made between 'used' and 'old', or 'worn out' clothing, just as what Frick (2005) had stated. The people in Florence traded used but still usable textile, and even traded used luxury clothing such as wedding gowns. Different accessories and ornaments on the gown can be taken apart and sold separately as well. *Rigattieri* did help to solve an emergent financial need for the household. Interestingly, even though the used textiles were mostly bought from the upper class families, they

would also use second hand textiles bought from the rigattieri in their 'new' garment. (Frick, 2005, p.16.)

The rigattieri played a few roles during the Renaissance time. First of all, they provided basic linens for the household, which ranged from underwear, caps, scarves, tablecloths, sheets and other washable items. The household units might not have a woman who can sew traditional domestic linens, as one out of six household was composed of widowers, bachelors, brothers, orphans or unrelated individuals. Thus, these groups of people have to rely on regittieri for their linen supplies. (Herlihy & Klapisch-Zuber, 1985, cited in Frick, 2005, p.20-21.) Secondly, rigittieri had provided work for the female domestic makers of personal and family linens, who had been rejected from the guilds to work in the textile craft under the strictest regulations of Florence compared to other cities such as Paris and Cologne (Doren, 1940-48, cited in Frick, 2005, p. 21).

As the worth of goods had to be legally set by the court, another role of a rigattieri was to provide professional evaluation of clothing and accessories for legal purposes at the merchant court (Frick, 2005, p.21). Their expertise in buying and selling clothes in the marketplace has granted them this social function. Lastly, a rigattieri was a minor guildsman as well as a shop owner. This happened when the luxury items in the major guilds were brought to the rigattieri and started their second lives. (Frick, 2005, p. 22.) Ironically, the second hand clothing trade also helped to reinvent fashion. As part of the clothing such as sleeves and bodices were detachable and sold separately, this has given the freedom to mix and match the pieces with other accessories such as hats, belts, scarves and cloaks. The Renaissance fancied unusual combination of colours, so the independently sold used linings have allowed them to customise their clothing based on their own tastes. (Frick, 2005, p. 26.)

Chapter 5: The current fashion/ textile consumption setting and ways of slowing down their consumption

A brief background on the fashion and textile consumption in the Nordic context seems to be an appropriate way to provide an idea about this consumption matter, as it is the immediate environment where the thesis was carried out. On top of that, Nordic countries are more aware of the sustainability issue, and so, it would be interesting to see their wastage statistic and figures. After that, a few different methods have been presented as a guideline on slowing down fashion and textile consumption in this chapter.

5.1 A background on the current fashion and textile consumption and wastage in the Nordic countries

This research on the textile used in the Nordic context is relevant in these studies because it is a reference and 'guideline' in the context of researching about textile waste and how the used clothing is circulated.

From the research paper of Norden (2012), a Nordic co-operation and collaboration among Åland, Denmark, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Sweden and the Faroe Islands, textile has been an essential material in daily life with an increasing usage over the years. This phenomenon has encouraged a high volume of production, which eventually led to more textile consumption flow and wastage. The consequences that were brought to the environment are inevitable, and yet, to totally avoid textile consumption is impossible as well. Hence, the prevention of textile waste is a more practical and sensible way to address this issue.

The authors from this research project, Tojo., et al (2012) presented their findings on the textile flow from the time when the textile products were placed in the market until their end-of-life. Three Nordic countries have been selected as the case study which include Denmark, Finland and Sweden. These countries have contributed 140,000 tonnes of textile wastage. In Sweden itself, the textile consumption has increased from 2000 to 2009. The textile waste were collected by charity organisations, and over the years, these countries also started to reuse textile and clothing via charity outlets, internet and flea markets. (Tojo., et al, 2012.)

In Denmark, it was reported that the domestic use of textile was 89,000 tonnes in 2010. Based on the estimation, the amount of used clothing collection was 35,000 tonnes per year (Hove, 2011, cited by Tojo., et al, 2012, p. 24). However, the studies also indicated that this figure could be overstated. On the other hand, the quantity of reused/recycled clothing is increasing, perhaps due to the fast changing fashion trends, cheaper pricing and thus the low quality that caused their disposal. The used clothing was collected by NGOs and a private actor. The objective of the NGOs is to provide cheap clothing to the people in need and also to raise funds for the organisation. (Tojo., et al, 2012, p. 24.) Luxury second hand clothing is also becoming more popular among consumers and is mushrooming. These used or un-used 'second hand' clothing were sold on consignment basis with a more affordable price to the consumer. However, the amount of reused textile is small in Denmark. Textile would be cut into small pieces to be turned into industrial wipes and the small amount of those that are not qualified for direct reuse are turned into cleaning cloth. Nevertheless, these 'activities' were declining due to the shortage of labour force. Some fashion design labels are also reusing textile from the industrial waste to turn into fashion items as well. These will be further explored later on. (Tojo., et al, 2012, pp. 22, 24, 26, 29-30.)

5.2 Implementation on cutting down fashion waste, the examples

An investigation was carried out in looking for methods that could lessen the fashion consumption, or any like-minded ones just like renew-old. The exploration has summed up five different categories and presented below.

5.2.1 Slow Fashion

The emergence of slow fashion is influenced by the slow food movement, which celebrates the slowness of fashion in terms of value and culture. Fletcher & Grose (2011) claimed that, "Slow fashion requires a changed infrastructure and a reduced throughput of goods. Categorically, slow fashion is not about business as usual and simply designing classic and planning long lead times." (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 128.) This statement indicates that in order to be slow, we have to do it from the 'root', because design strategy such as planning for a longer lead time, or design in a classical manner, which suppose to last for a longer time do not help in slowing down the fashion system. The 'root' is in the system itself, whereby we need to analyse and improve this cycle from the very fundamental of it.

According to an online source The Bobbin (Svensson, 2012), slow fashion means a process involves designing, creating and buying clothing that is valuable and durable. It also cherishes the means of slow productivity, decent salaries, reduced carbon footprints and preferably zero waste.

There are a few characteristics of slow fashion, which include small-scale production, traditional craft techniques creation, and local materials and markets promotion. Just as what Gwilt & Rissanen (2011) believed, valuing local, genuine, good quality and taste education can minimise excessive spending. Slow fashion confronts globalisation by suggesting the freedom of choice we could have in consuming fashion wisely, but not blindly driven by the offers in the market. (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011, p.128 & 153.)

Slow fashion is an attitude towards fashion consumption, and a practice regardless of individual or corporation. To cite an example, Dr. Gene Sherman, the Executive Director of the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation in Sydney, Australia, is an interesting personage in slow fashion consumption, where she advocates “buy less, buy better”, and practices this by only acquiring high quality and atypical pieces in her wardrobe. She appreciates designs from Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto, as she claimed their pieces are original, unusual, timeless and yet in high quality. Each time when she bought new pieces, she would sort out her wardrobe and remove those ‘old’ ones. Nonetheless, she does great preservations on those used pieces by packing them in the conservation boxes after taking the photo documentation of them. Those garments are labelled with the dates and venues of purchase as well, and will then be donated to the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011, p.119.) These preservation works has conserved the physical condition of the garments, while the documentation of clothing has capsulated the sentimental value towards the clothing itself simultaneously, as the stories told will be remembered, and the memories could be revisited anytime.

For Dr. Gene Sherman’s case, Gwilt & Rissanen (2011) articulated that this pattern of consumption “can allow her to build a ‘deeper level of engagement’ with the clothes themselves and to build over time a personal ongoing narrative and set of associative values.” (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011, p. 119). It means buy less thus the longer time will be spent with all the garments we owned, and this helps to gain emotional value through the physical attachment to it. This principal was applied to other possessions as well. It is just that, to build this long term relationship with a piece of garment is not a common practice nowadays because of the mass fashion, fast consumption and disposal habit. Therefore, slow fashion is a practice we have to upkeep, an effort we have to persevere with and to be reminded of. It may not happen overnight but there needs to be an effort to constantly deal with the desire of purchasing the new.



Figure 2. Coat by Yohji Yamamoto, 1994



Figure 2.1 Jacket by Issey Miyake, 1999

The discussed example above is of an individual practice, nevertheless, the more efficient way to disseminate the idea of slow fashion is through corporation. For this instance, the internet company, Betabrand, is a good example in demonstrating this 'ideology'. They adopt the 'Long Tail' strategy, by shifting focus from mass production of mainstream products to a limited production for the market demands. Betabrand is an online business, they produce new products each week. However, the quantity is only limited to one hundred pieces only. The speed of their production is swifter than any of the other traditional fashion companies, but meanwhile, the production with this limited quantity makes them exclusive and valuable too. At the same time, this method also slows down the volume and flow of materials into the fashion system. (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p.129.)

Besides benefiting from the social aspect, slow fashion does enhance individualism because it encourages ones to develop their personal styles. When an individual no longer longs for the superficiality of fashion, hence, they are 'liberated', they will be able to express the way they like to dress with their existing, new and old pieces. They will also have to improvise with limited existing clothing, and through playing with styling to create variations. They may even become more innovative, and develop a look and style that they can claim as their own. This is truly a democratisation of fashion, referred to Fletcher & Grose (2011). In order to illustrate further, following is a case study of an artist's response towards the excessive fashion consumption.

Personalizing fashion, the case study: The little brown dress

The little brown dress was a performance art by Alex Martin, who is currently based in Seattle, US. In her demonstration against the enormous amount of clothing consumption, she attempted to wear the same dress for a year, in which she had sewn herself two brown dresses (but she only wore one of them), and changed the look of the outfit by layering it with different garments, and also to adapt to the seasonal change. In this performance, her target audience was women. (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011, p.123.)



Figure 2.2 The little brown dress project by Alex Martin

The motivation of this social activism performance art is good to create awareness among the public. Nevertheless, I have doubts about the impact of this 'movement'. My concern is not exactly about its 'efficiency' to educate the fashion consumers (the women), but rather, I am questioning whether this scheme of 'wearing the same dress everyday' can truly lead to the minimisation of fashion consumption. First of all, if it were to target the women consumers, and aim to change their mindsets and attitudes towards clothing shopping, I suppose the effective way is to get them inspired, and lure them into the sentiment of 'wanting to become what they see because it is special', just like how fashion works on them. This 'inspiration' perhaps is a form of seduction as well, in which the woman has to feel excited in the first place in order to fall into the 'trap'. To sum this up, I feel that Alex Martin's exploration and concept has fulfilled the quest, however, the outcome and the visualisation might not be as desirable to 'captivate'.

Secondly, seeking for variation within a single dress is a challenge. It is true that the styling could be changed with different layerings, but the layers themselves are the extras which are inevitably added on to the expenses and become part of the clothing consumption as well. Hence, the consumption of clothing might not be lessened unfortunately. Therefore, I think it is not necessary

to wear the SAME dress 24/7, but opt for an alternate rotation, mix and match, an allowance for experimentation, or even a bit of playfulness could be a sound option to sustain the lifespan of the wardrobe. This is also how one builds his/her own charisma through dressing, and it should be embraced. Nonetheless, the impact does need time to build up.

5.2.2 Local Wisdom

Another strategy that could cut down fashion consumption is 'Local Wisdom' initiated by Kate Fletcher. It is a project to investigate and explore the utilisation of clothing among the communities across three continents.

Local Wisdom collects anecdotes and pictures from the community and documents them into different method groups. The data are then used as the inspirations for design projects that take place in different countries: Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, UK and USA. This process reveals how each individual in different societies tend to their clothing, and by what means to sustain their life span rather than creating new pieces.

Local Wisdom has their agendas and have set specific criteria of the stories they are looking for in a piece of garment. As taken from their online source, here stated that they require a garment which:

“

- a) Is easily repairable
- b) Is shared between people
- c) Is enjoying a third, fourth or fifth life
- d) Surprises you each time you wear it
- e) Shows or tells the story of how it has been used
- f) Is worn in ways that defy the producer's values
- g) Is worn regularly and has never been washed (and isn't leather!)
- h) Is made up of interchangeable pieces that can be worn in different ways connect you to others
- i) Is worn response to changing economic and environmental concerns
- j) Is adapted over and again in order to meet changing needs ”



Figure 2.3 Never washed, Kolding, Denmark, September 2012



Figure 2.4 A long life dress that has been worn for twenty years

5.2.3 Re-use and reconditioning

There are a few 're-' terms/processes that might complicate our understanding about the use of clothing in a sustainable way. Apart from renew-old initiated in this research, and recycle that will be discussed further in Chapter six, here we will briefly touch on 're-use', and 'reconditioning' beforehand.

Reuse clothing can be defined as the reselling of old clothing at the charity store, for instance, Goodwill in US, Salvation Army and Oxfam in UK (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 66). It is a much simpler process compared to reconditioning because there is no re-working of the sold garments, but just as they are when put in the charity store for selling. On the other hand, reconditioning involves a more complicated procedures on garments, where techniques such as reshaping, re-cutting and re-stitching the parts of the garment together with the mixing and matching of other materials incorporated in order to create a unique piece of design. There are an increasing number of designers who favour this way of creating, by applying craft techniques or even the latest technology on the used garment, and it is also possible to combine materials with vintage fabrics too. This process is considered upcycling, because the values added on these pieces are higher than the low perceived value of used clothing. (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p.69.) Gwilt & Rissanen (2011) also have related 'upcycling' to 'reuse' and 'repurpose', in which the authors re-emphasised the term of 'refashioned' and 'value added' upon destroyed or defective objects (garments) during the process of upcycling (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011, p. 35).

There are a few more examples that use the similar design method in their collections, which are Somewhere, Goodnote (both from UK), and Junky Styling. Somewhere works with post-industrial waste, rather than post-consumer waste, because it is harder to estimate and control the quantity for the latter, and that affects the flow of designing as well. In this context, post-industrial waste refers to materials such as trimmings or defective products from the factory, whereas post-consumer waste are items that have been disposed by the end user after the so-called 'useful cycle' (CAF Extrusion, 2010). Meanwhile, Goodnote applies patchwork in their design, which is said to prevent wastage during cutting process, and more cost-effective to manufacture too. The last on the list is Junky Styling, which works on used suits bought from the charity shops as well as from the factories. These few examples has amplified the fact that, the existing garments are more to be seen as a source of materials to be used to create new pieces rather than to be reshaped. (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 69.)

5.2.4 The use of craft

Besides all the above-mentioned, the application of craft techniques is one of the practices to slow down fashion consumption, too.

Craft is a sustainable working method on clothing due to its handmade characteristic, and the source of materials is retraceable. This working relationship with resources, and the hands-on processes can enhance the product experience by giving richer sentimental value towards the product. It is also said to be a democratic archetype, because anyone can get their hands on craft, and not only those with an advantage or well-to-do. (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p.149.)



Figure 2.5 Elisheva Cohen-Fried's short jacket which designed with finger-knitted extension that enable the user to add on after buying the garment

5.2.5 Hacking and repairing fashion

The term 'hacking' is normally referring the practice in computing technology, where software modifications are made, an act to disrupt a website, or 'performing operation' upon consumer electronic goods. Otto von Busch, who is an agent provocateur on fashion hacking, said that this mode of hacking is about re-circulating the materials, and also to revise the fashion approaches within its system. He believes that the fashion trends coming from major fashion cities, such as London, Milan, New York, Paris and Tokyo can be 'hacked' and re-functioned too, and yet does not derail from the fundamentals of fashion.

Fashion hacking is normally done by an individual in their domestic environment, albeit it seems like a small effort, in fact a small gesture can also lead to the change of a society, and it is possible to further alter the view on fashion too.

Otto von Busch also provides a collection-making manual that is called 'recyclopedica'. It includes patterns, instructions and sewing tips to encourage clothes-making in the community, and to reinforce their skill through hands-on production. (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p.152.)

One of the hacking examples was a three-day experiment at Dale Sko shoe factory in Norway, 2006. It was a collaboration effort between Norwegian fashion designers and this shoe factory to address the issue about international homogeneous trends and limited local production. Dale Sko is a hundred-year old shoe factory, but threatened by the globalised market and now they are focusing on small production of hand-made shoes. Through this collaboration, the designers were able to create shoes by re-manipulating the materials on the current model with the new ones, and to have better understanding about the constraints and possibilities of shoe-making and related matters. (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p.152.)



Figure 2.6 The 'hacking' Dale Sko shoe factory in Norway

After which, we will now discuss about repairing fashion. The defunct Platform 21 from Netherland was a design platform questioning today's design practice by addressing issues such as the openness in design through the sharing of creative processes, initiating dialogues, distributing knowledge between the design practitioners from all levels. They have also initiated the strategy of 'hacking', albeit their concept was specific, which was gearing towards "Hacking Ikea". Nevertheless, Platform 21 had suggested and initiated different design solutions, and had held many workshops as well. Other than 'hacking', they have also come out with their own 'Repair Manifesto'. In this manifesto, they have mentioned "Stop Recycling, Start Repairing". It definitely has its valid rationales and practices that are dissimilar to 'recycling', which are shown in their manifesto (included in appendix). It was also mentioned that the work of repairing enriches the history and substance of that particular repaired object. This has shared the similar ideology to 'renew-old', of how the stories and background of the owner are woven in as part of the garment, and to create a certain value for them towards the garments.

There are another two points I would like to sum up here, as they reflect the practice of renewing-old as well: Repair is timeless, because it has no deadline, no trend, thus does not fall into any seasonal concept when it comes to fashion creation. Repair is absolutely not solely for economical reasons, but it is also about the attitude and mindset.

This chapter shall be concluded here, and next I will proceed to Chapter 6 where the comparison between renewed and recycled clothing will be made, and the value of used clothing will be discussed.

Chapter 6: the comparison between recycled, DIY and renewed clothing & the assessment of values

There was confusion each time when renew-old was mentioned, and easily being mistaken as 'recycle'. Therefore, this chapter was contributed to clarify this matter, by addressing renew-old and other seemingly similar methods in the same fashion context. This comparison was important in finding out the positioning of renew-old among others. Towards the end of this chapter was the presentation of different concepts of values from various philosophers, sociologists and researchers. Among all, Baudrillard (1986)'s logic on consumption was a fascinating understanding about value that was commodity bounded, even though they were not directly connected to the working of renewing-old.

6.1 The comparison between recycled, DIY and renewed clothing

For the majority who are not familiar with the term renew-old, it is easily confused with another more commonly practiced and so-called sustainable fashion strategy: recycle. Nevertheless, these two methods shall not be mentioned in the same breath, for the reason that a couple of characteristics have been identified, and they are different from each other.

The term of recycling in fashion glossary normally refers to the re-use of the textile as raw materials, where the garments are going through mechanical and chemical processes in order to shred and separate their fibers. The fibers are then broken down and become shorter, which is only acceptable to turn into lower quality bulky yarns. "All these strategies are influenced by a larger trend of downcycling - that is a downgrading of the quality of reclaimed materials into cheap, low-value end uses." Besides, recycling cannot permanently help to avoid textile and clothing waste. (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 63, 70 & 73.) This statement has convinced that renew-old is dissimilar to recycle, because downcycling is exactly contrasting to the objective of renew-old in my practice, where it is an upcycling process, and aimed to extend the life span of the garment via creating more interesting features on the wearable based on the data collected from the interviewees, who are also the contributors of the used clothing. And hence, theoretically, in the hope to encourage another cycle of ownership, if not creating emotional bonding towards the garment when it is returned to the user. More over, renew-old is not merely about materials and processes, but its core idea is also to emphasize on the behavioral change in attitude and mindset,

which is probably a more validate way to sustain the fashion system. Meanwhile, re-design is also another indispensable process in renewing-old. The official definition of re-design according to an online dictionary means, "To make a revision in the appearance or function of." (Farlex, 2013). This has perfectly summed up the workings behind renew-old. Renew-old is a process to re-think the original form of an object, and make anew. Through the process of re-designing, it might even omit the initial usage of that particular object and giving a new meaning in its utility. Renew-old is strategic and can even be provocative.

On the other hand, the time factor is inevitable, and always plays a crucial role within the fashion system in terms of the seasonal trends and fad. The faster the trend comes and goes, the harder it is to slow down. In the project, Local Wisdom, Kate Fletcher also said that the materials and technology always being misinterpreted as elements for sustainable fashion. Nevertheless, sustainable fashion is also about behavior, association and thoughts, likewise, which is also what I would like to emphasise on this renew-old practice.

"Lifespan, or durability, is frequently understood first and foremost as a physical phenomenon: resilient materials and robust construction. But physical durability is a flawed solution in sustainability terms. Often in the fashion sector, a discarded product is not an indicator of poor product quality, but rather of a failed relationship between the product and the wearer. Studies show that 90 percent of clothing is thrown away long before the end of its useful life." (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 85.) According to this quote, it shows the importance of the bonding between the garment and the wearer, which exceeds any tangible circumstances of physicality in materials or fabrication. The long lastingness of the materials does matter in its long-term usage and for the keepsake of the owner, but this is not the entire factor, which contributes to its short-lived status. As a hypothesis, this hinted that there is another 'invisible' factor beyond the surface of the garment, which can be summed up as the attachment towards the garment. And so, there is a possibility that the garment can be kept and used for a longer time, if only the connection between the garment and the owner is strengthened. Again, this speculation shows the difference between recycle and renew-old, because the latter practice intends to add value to the garments, which believed to have the possibility of forming a longer relationship and emotional bonding between the owner and garment.

To sum this up, renew-old is to sustain the relationship between the garment and the wearer. This bonding between object and human, is not unlike the connection between humans even though it might involve a different level or degree, which is about "material, social-cultural and economic systems with nature" (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 143).

Renew-old is an attitude and mindset that need time to cultivate; it is a practice that needs to be reminded of and encouraged. As Fletcher & Grose (2011) claimed, "Restoring the relationship between fashion, the social and ecological systems that support it requires transformation of the remote, abstract 'world' that has so far shaped conventional industry into something more direct and connected." (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p.143). In other words, besides a durational based 'cultivation' in oneself, the social factor should be scrutinised as well, and only with the shift of conventional model could help to change the system in a wholly manner.

Another objective of renewing-old that can be differentiated from recycling is the dissimilarity in aesthetic. The renew-old process performed in this research is bound to seek the distinctions between these two methods. Later, to challenge that perception towards recycled clothing, and finally finding its set of visual language and concept. Fletcher & Grose (2011) also suggested that sustainability needs to be supported by aesthetic because the physical appearance reveals information and easier to be understood and studied. It is the agent of change that affects the social aspect, apart from being a source of ideas and reference. (Fletcher & Grose, 2011.)

Renewing-old clothing is very likely to be associated with DIY fashion apart from recycling: a long shirt becomes a mini skirt, a denim pants becomes a tote bag, a pair of pants turns into a skirt and so forth. Innovation is a form of sustainability, and various DIY methods can be easily found online too. However, I identify the DIY method as a 'domestic innovation', which happens within the context of the clothing itself, whereby the 'alterations' takes place within its own context and parts, or adding other elements as embellishments. I see a different way of intervention as compared to the design framework of renewing-old for this instance. First of all, the renew-old process in this thesis research works within a framework and art direction. In other words, it is curated. It is a solution to clothing and yet, it is not a resolve based on the surface value but also other external factors coming from the owners. DIY is a spontaneous method and is not bounded by any specific circumstance besides 'how to make this useful again? How to transform this into something else, and still wearable?' It might be lacking in context, and could be anything and transformed into anything. Therefore, the aesthetic evolves around an unlimited range and yet they look monotonous as well (how many different ways a shirt can be transformed into? as there is always two sleeves, a collar, perhaps an additional pocket... how many innovative ways can be thought of and applied based on these few characteristics of a shirt?)



Figure 3. A handbag made of recycled chip packets



Figure 3.1 A DIY handbag, part of the personal DIY series done by the author for a Singapore fashion magazine, Seventeen



Figure 3.2 A DIY series done by the author for a Singapore fashion magazine, Seventeen: A handbag, a belt and a sleeve scarf

6.2 A comparison between recycled fashion labels and renewed clothing labels

In this section a recycling brand has been selected and studied in order to open up the discussion and making comparison to the renew-old methodology.

This exploration started with the recycling brand, XULY.Bët. It is an African and European fashion brand that uses recycled clothing to create high fashion. The designer is said to have ‘balanced’ the trendiness of clothing, in which he creates garments that retain their previous lives while still remain their relevance to the contemporary fashion context. His designs also fuse the complexity of his cultural and historical roots, which plays a significant aspect in building up the brand and marketing strategy. (Rovine, 2005, pp. 215 & 217.)

XULY.Bët transforms the salvaged garments into new functions. For example, a sweater could become a scarf, while pants can be turned into a purse. The designer also applies silkscreened motifs or slogans onto the garments that bears the company’s slogan: ‘Funkin’ Fashion’. The seams of the garments are often disassembled and the structures are revealed, which could be

explained by his background in architecture prior in becoming a fashion designer. (Rovine, 2005, p. 216.)



Figure 3.3 XULY.Bët parka with silkscreen printing at the back

Through this investigation of the recycled clothing, it has shown that the emphasis is usually on the usage of textile materials and the ability to transform these materials into other fashion clothing or accessories. Even though the designer of XULY.Bët retained the previous life of a particular piece of garment, what has remained serves no particular meaning to the clothing. Firstly, the links between the 'histories', garments and the wearers are broken. This so-called 'stories' are dispensable as compared to 'renew-old', where the latter aspire to blend the backgrounds, trajectories, memories, interests or any other thoughts collected upon the process of designing. The second dissimilarity between recycling and my proposed method of renewing old is the differences in visual language. The renewed clothing tries to avoid a blatant aesthetic like how recycled clothing is usually perceived. It is attempting to deviate from the stereotypical. Therefore, it is crucial for this research to inject a 'new' aesthetic of the unfamiliar, and theoretically it should perform the ideal of lessening the clothing consumption waste.

6.3 An overview of different sets of value

The emotional value is one of the crucial aspects to be examined in the renew-old process in this thesis research. Following is the study to find out different sets of value, such as how they affect the status quo of a product/garment, and why an embedded value is thought to be crucial in prolonging the life of a piece of garment.

The design framework of this research is renew-old, and through this process of renewing used garments, the information and stories gathered from the owners will become part of the interpretation of the final piece, to be fused together with the design processes. The effort of renewing is to give second life to the garments, ideally thinking, it is to add value to the pieces, and subsequently hoping to evoke a sense of attachment towards the owner, and prolong their life spans. A 'design brief' also has been created as part of the execution process for the customisation purpose based on each used garment contributors' background and stories. This will be discussed further in Chapter eight.

The value mentioned in this renew-old and design process should be of a specific one, which is deemed to be appropriate to bridge the 'gap' between the garment and the owner. Jean Baudrillard (1981) has talked about different sets of value in his logic of consumption: functional value, exchange value, symbolic value, and sign value. In his statements, the functional value is a form of practicality, while the exchange value is of the economical perspective. The symbolic value is "a logic of the gift", such as a wedding ring, which is dissimilar to an ordinary ring because a wedding ring symbolizes a relationship between couples. And lastly, the sign value is about the differences indicated in the symbol, of status quo. (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 66.) Apart from that, Gibbins & Reimar (1999) have also provided perspectives on value differ from the aforementioned. They talked about value orientations in the postmodern era, where it is emphasising on the generality, in believing that every individual should be able to become what they want to be (Gibbins & Reimar, 1999, p. 98).

Each and every author has their own interpretations about 'value', it is perhaps not dissimilar to what Niinimäki (2011) had stated, that every individual's choice of values are based on their understanding to suit themselves or to the group that this individual desires to belong to (Niinimäki, 2011, p. 46). She also mentioned that the traditional role of a designer is to add value, thereafter the standard of living could be improved through design. And yet, this is somewhat far-fetched as the impact of manufacturing processes have created negative effects to the environment rather than doing more good. (Niinimäki, 2011, p. 50.)

Besides, Niinimäki (2011) also discussed about the concept of value, value creators and what she has conceptualised: the future-oriented value (Niinimäki , 2011, p. 46). Among the mentioned values, the emotional value is found to fit very well into the context of the renewing old process. The product life span is relevant to the emotional attachment of that particular object, they are interactive: If the owner is emotionally attached to the object, she or he will take good care of it, hence, the life span could be extended. On the other hand, the length of ownership itself does not guarantee the attachment towards the item. (Niinimäki, 2011, p. 58.) That is because an emotional value involves a greater level of participation and interaction with that object (someone might have stored a piece of shirt in the closet for ten years but remain untouched, hence there is no bonding between them). The personal stories and memories are not exchangeable because they contain no monetary value.

To conclude this, the emotional value is an opportunity in design strategy to prolong product life by creating attachment towards it. It is sustainable as it is a form of immaterialisation, of no involvement of materials but only individual experiences and memories.

Chapter 7: Clothing with biography

The studies about Kopytoff's (1986) theory is intriguing as his theory talks about the transformation of identity within a commodity, which I find it relevant to the states of clothing between the new, worn and renewed.

Kopytoff's (1986) 'The Cultural Biography of Things' has opened up a new dimension for the interpretation of identity in object. I hence see the relationship between a garment and its wearer, is in fact a story that is interdependent. A garment displayed in the store is a blank canvas without any context apart from being merchandise, or a commodity. And only when it is bought, this canvas will then be filled by the owner, who has become a 'painter' in this context.

In this chapter, we will look at the aspect of used clothing as a commodity that involves story telling. As each of the pre-loved garments has a previous life, it means that there are 'stories' involved. This is well interpreted in Kopytoff's (1986) essay 'The Cultural Biography of Things'. In his theory, the object-hood of things is situated in between singularity and commodity. Singularity is cultural and individual. It is not exchange-able. However, it is also the counter-drive of commoditisation. "In the sense that commoditization homogenizes value, while the essence of culture is discrimination, excessive commoditization is anti-cultural." (Kopytoff, 1986, pp. 73-74.) This illustrates that enormous commoditisation could be discriminated by culture, and therefore, mass consumption could be 'non-cultural' as well. Following that, coining what Kopytoff (1986) has stated in the same essay, he claimed that the status of a thing 'fluctuated' when the physical environment changed. The state of commoditisation is subjective and based on a particular context, therefore, it is possible for what has been commoditised to become singular again. (Kopytoff, 1986, pp. 73 & 64.) For instance, a ring being displayed in the shop as a merchandise, but once it was bought as a gift and passed to the first owner's keepsake, its value has changed from commodity to a non-exchangeable ring that embeds certain meaning to the owner. In this example, we could find the similarity between the biography of thing and human, as Kopytoff (1986) argued that in human life, men could have different biographical profiles: professional, economic, psychological, familial, political and so forth, and this apply to things too. (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 68.)

Based on Kopytoff's (1986) theory, I would sum up the hypothesis that the changing state in things does contribute to different biographical profiles, and it is very likely that the 'modification' of an

object's biographical profiles lead to the shift of its economical and social context too. This theory is prominent in used clothing.

Chapter 8: The working

This execution took approximately three months to complete and three pieces of 'new' outfits from the old clothing was the result. This chapter will be presenting the working process, as well as the thoughts that were realised during the making, and finally, the conclusion and analysis.

8.1 The Goal and the expectation

The ultimate goal of this thesis research is to look into a more ethical way of consuming fashion, manifested through the method of 'renewing old'. This method is only one of the solutions in addressing the issue about cutting down fashion consumption. It could be hypothetically correct, or perhaps simply part of an 'idealism' of sustainable fashion. The effort needed is not only from the design aspect, but the behavioral change of the consumers as well. Ethical thinking as a core in the designing process is rather coherent to Papanek's (1995) argument, whereby he argued that the basis of ethical thinking affects the consequences of our design intervention (Papanek, 1995, p. 70). This research and work execution has blended in the theory (a conceptualised framework) and practices (the hands on renewing and experimenting process).

The ultimate intention of this research and experimentation is the hope to suggest a different interest in fashion unlike what has been indoctrinated by the mainstream fashion world thus far. Impeccably speaking, this exploration is beyond clothing, and hopefully, to express the ideas of how fashion (clothing) could affect our lives as well. This 'trial' could be valid, as Papanek (1995) also stated that, "[W]hen design is connected to a deep sense of environmental responsibility, new forms, aesthetics and style will be developed, [...]" (Papanek, 1995, cited from Niinimäki, 2011, p. 51). To response to that, I would like to emphasise that the interest of renewing-old is to quietly question the function of fashion and being critical about its system, which is more or less about excessive fashion consumption, and believe that a more ethical move should be implemented to minimise damage to the environment.

8.2 The findings from past thesis papers

A similar research to my exploration of renewing-old has also been found from the past thesis papers, for instance ' "Meubles Habillés" for a more sustainable society' by Dubois, Pierre-

François, from the Department of Applied art and design, dated 2010. Although the context of his thesis is nothing like renew-old, as he emphasised that our social position is constantly changing, thus there needs a change in our material surroundings as well. Meanwhile, he had also mentioned that the designer is playing a role to influence people's behavior, the changes could also affect the sense of aesthetic as well. (Dubois, 2010.) For this instance, both of our researches have shared the same point of view on this aspect, which is the shift of aesthetic criteria, even though our focused products are different.

Another thesis research found was Liisa Riski's ' "Not Ugly": System approach for sustainable fashion design', written in 2009. Her research sounded more relevant to mine, as our investigations were related to the sustainability within the realm of fashion industry. Nevertheless, her approach was dissimilar to 'renew-old', as her exploration was on the complexity of sustainability with the emphasis on fashion industry. She was emphasizing on product and material development in the search of a suitable direction for her collection. As conclusion, renew-old is a method that has not been explored thus far during these recent year's thesis research.

8.3 The collecting

I greatly appreciate the efforts of these contributors for posting their boxes of old garments to Finland. A few boxes/ parcels have arrived from different cities: Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan.

As I was doing the documentation of the used clothing, I had a rather strange, somehow intimate feeling while fingering through them and on the surface of every fiber. Nevertheless, it is not the physicality that has triggered this thought, but rather, it was the absence of the wearers. Having said that, it is also physical, if not this feeling would not be evoked, for I actually did touch the garments with my bare hands and skin. As I tried to button the shirts, I imagined how the previous owners button them. Did they feel the same way as I did when I button them? How did they feel when they first saw them and decided to purchase them, and how did they feel when they sent them away eventually? And so, while looking at the selection of clothing from the contributors, which included the number of pieces and the kind of used clothing they sent, I started to have some 'speculation' on their preferences and personalities.

Among all the contributors, I believe Nee from Malaysia has sent me what she really treasured and loved. She sent me two of her favourite dresses. We had a conversation about those dresses, and

perhaps that was the reason why I empathised with her when I touched and saw the wear and tear marks on the dresses. As I caressed the sheer and fragile textile, there were different thoughts that came to my mind, mainly about how it relates to the context of the lifestyle of the wearer.

Nevertheless, the garments were worn out not because of the rough living condition or long term use, but rather, the quality of the goods were poor, and also because of the fast changing trends of fashion, they were made cheap and not meant to last for a long time. However, Nee claimed that she likes the prints and materials, so even when they were torn after being worn only a few times, she has kept them longer than the time she has used them. Therefore, I felt the shame of this short life span. Nee would definitely wear them for a longer period of time, if only they could last a bit longer.

Ken-ichi from Japan has sent the most pieces over. Among the thirteen pieces of clothing that he has sent, there was one checkered shirt, four woolen pullovers, four jumpers and another four long sleeve sweatshirts/pullovers. He still feels attached to these clothing, and yet he has also shown great generosity in his 'donation'. From the traces left on some of the garments, it seems like he has kept them for a long period of time. In fact, it was true that those pieces were kept since years ago, which I found out from him later on through a series of interview questions. He mentioned that he has worn those garments for about two to six years, and the oldest piece was bought fifteen years ago. He purchased them as he liked the colours and designs, or maybe because they were really cheap as all of them were from the second hand clothing stores. That could also explain the yellowing affect on some of the garments, because that could be the old marks from the previous owner that had added on to Ken-ichi's.

"Redesigned or repurposed clothing often comes with layers of meaning; at the same time that the history of the garment is evident, so a contemporary identity exists." (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011, p. 150). This layering of history is an interesting aspect to ponder upon in this process. In the renewing process of the first shirts, the 'swapping' of garments (although only parts of them) between different owners is a way to 'imitate' how the second hand clothing shopping works, in a way we are wearing some strangers' clothes, and thus the histories/ meaning of the clothes are overlapped. That is how I found Kopytoff's theory relevant and exciting, because the identities of the garments evolve from time to time too.

I have also received two t-shirts, a jacket and pants from Fuzz who lives in Singapore. He bought these garments out of necessity (except the jacket, which was found at the airport), and has worn them for two to three years before. He is willing to send them away now as he said he did not wear them anymore. These clothing from him are still looking new without any damage or stain.

Martin from Hong Kong has sent a short sleeve checkered shirt over. He said he has kept this shirt for four years, even though he did not wear it anymore. He only wore it a couple of times during the first six months after the purchase, but afterwards he thought the shirt did not suit him, and perhaps he did not have anything suitable to match with this shirt, so he lost interest and stopped wearing it. Ironically, the reason he bought it was because he thought the colours were unique. This also perhaps illustrates that when we discard certain things, we disregard the good reason(s) we purchased them in the first place, and only realising how they clashed with our own personality when we own them.

Up to this moment, I think this process of gathering old garments has already gone beyond the objective of trying to cut down fashion consumption, but it had also provided insights on the relationship between the wearers and their clothing.

8.4 The execution / process

The quantity of used garments collected had exceeded my expectation, as I thought it was quite an overwhelming response to receive twenty pieces from four individuals who actually bothered to send the packages from such far places. I felt truly grateful for such kindness.

Although twenty used garments have been collected, only selected pieces were used for the experimentation with a coordinated colour scheme and structure of clothes in mind¹.

Those pieces used in the renewing process were from two shirts, a jacket, and a sweater. They are from three different contributors, and all are male. Due to favoritism in a certain look and aesthetic, I decided not to use the dresses in this process. Nevertheless, I would think that this renewing old process is genderless. Upon collection of the used clothing, I have also sent out a 'design brief' to each of the contributor in order to collect some information related to the colours, shapes, textures, or a piece of memory and so forth. The 'design brief' can be found at the appendix. This helps to shape each piece of the renewed garment, and to know their renewal preference as the garment will be given to them upon completion.

During the renewing process, the plan was to mix the parts around between garments, which also mean that each contributor was swapping his/her garment obligatorily as they receive the renewed garment with parts from another stranger at the end of this research work. The thought of interchanging/owning parts of clothing from other party derived from the idea that buying second hand clothing is also a form of clothing exchange between strangers.

This renew-old processes were done in three approaches, which has been realised in each of the garment as listed below:

The first shirt: Try Too Hard To Be Art

Work title: A Dual Shirt

The first shirt is a combination of Ken-ichi, Fuzz and Martin's garments. In which Ken-ichi's grey woolen sweater, Fuzz's jacket as well as another shirt from Martin have been used.

The first shirt was intended to be given to Ken-ichi upon completion even though it consists of garments from three different individuals. This decision was made because this first approach was more of an artistic interpretation of a garment, where it is a non-wearable² yet wearable art³, and Ken-ichi did mention that he does not mind if his garment turned into an art piece in the questionnaire. I would not want to claim that this is art, however, it is indeed more 'out of the norm' in the clothing terminology if compared to the other two pieces. This piece might also evoke the thought of a silly design, or trying too hard to be artistic with two pieces of garment attached together. Furthermore, in my personal opinion, to be 'art' is not simply about what has been made, but also the intention and practice of turning it as such.

Having to say that, I would conclude that this is a playful experimentation of a garment without worrying too much of the outcome⁴.

The first shirt: Try Too Hard To Be Art

A dual shirt

Top to bottom: Used garments from Martin, Fuzz and Ken-ichi



1



2



3



1. The remains of Martin's shirt

2. Part of the jacket from Fuzz

3. Cut out collar from Ken-ichi's woollen pullover

4. Assembling Martin's shirt, part of Fuzz's jacket and an 'external' material (a fabric remnant from another project) to form one side of the dual shirt. The sheer fabric has been made into two sleeves later on
5. Another piece of garment was constructed and attached at the back of it. It was named 'Ghost'





6

6. The details of the cut out collar attached on 'Ghost' embellished with a trimming.

7. Sleeve from Martin's shirt attached on 'Ghost' 7



The first shirt: Try Too Hard To Be Art

A dual shirt

Just like the name suggested, the first renewed shirt are two shirts combined and made into one. Although with the help of an 'external' material, the prominent parts of the original garments still remained.



Front

'Ghost'



'Ghost'

The second shirt: Into the practicality

Work title: Yellow Martin

This second approach intended to turn the ready-to-wear into another ready-to-wear. The renewal shirt was from Ken-ichi, and the completed design will be given to Martin.

The reason of renewing and redesigning a shirt into another shirt is a straightforward intention. Martin told me that he would not keep the renewed shirt if it turned into a piece of art / not wearable, so this is the reason of this execution and hopefully it is something that he would consider wearing in the future.

The second shirt: Into The Practicality

Yellow Martin
Used garment from Ken-ichi





1

2

1 & 2. The shirt has been cut into three parts, where the middle part was kept for renewing. The collar has been changed to a round collar, the pocket has been removed as well



3



4

3. A pair of yellow pocket were added by using 'external' new material. The grey portions were added on as an extension of the shirt, thus altered the original shape of the shirt
4. New sleeves were added as well by using fabric remnant given by a friend. They were accentuated by four gold buttons on each sleeve

The second shirt: Into The Practicality

Yellow Martin

An 'extended' shirt in width with two added front pocket



The third piece: The Endurance Of Craftwork

Work title: The OTT Capelet

This is the most tedious piece among all. I was trying to adopt a full fledge craft technique thus a great devotion of time has been spent in beading away the entire capelet. The base of this capelet was the remaining pieces from the working of the first shirt. In this OTT (Over The Top) Capelet, the effort of hand-beading was too luxurious and excessive if to place it in the context of current fast fashion phenomenon. So to say, this extravagantness makes it almost couture-like. Its vulnerability would have turned it into an artifact to be displayed in the museum window and remain untouched. It might be too much of an everyday wearable, because of all the aforementioned factors, it has somehow becomes a 'burden'.

Nevertheless, I am not against craft but quite the opposite. I believe that hand made/ craft is a form of sustainability, and should we practice it again like those olden days when our grandmothers or mothers did. "[...] craft is clearly political. It is an expression of production values, power relations, decision-making and pragmatism. Its sharp political edge is felt perhaps most distinctly in needlecraft's changed role in women's lives over the past 50 years. As recently as two generations ago, knitting, embroidery and dressmaking were part of women's domestic duties and household obligations, keeping females' 'idle hands busy'. By contrast, in the past decade, vastly different social-cultural, labour and material conditions have seen needlecraft reclaimed by women as liberating feminist action rather than as subjugating work. It has been recovered as a practical, satisfying, expressive and creative act in and of itself. It is now sometimes referred to as part of the 'new domesticity', where meaning is brought to a society dominated by mass-production and ready made products and with decreasing space and time for hobbies." (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 149.) I can see that this crafting movement is getting more prominent in Western societies with lots of blogs and communities support such activities, for instance crocheting, knitting, embroidery, and so on. Adopting the crafts skills could even become a movement to counter the habit of fast fashion consumption. Nonetheless, it might not be a direct impact but in certain way there is a connection. Or could it be that the idealism behind crafting and the crafter him/herself is to yearn for a world that is slower and less consumption? "Highly developed craft skills can be seen to support democratic ideals, for their potential is distributed widely among us all rather than attributed only to those with wealth or privilege [...] Further, craft production can be seen to convey a sense of restraint in consumption, a speed limit and volume cap, for after all you can only consume as much, and as fast, as the craftsperson can produce [...] It can suggest that we produce just enough for our own personal consumption (and in so doing opt out of the corporate,

industrial model);” (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p. 149.) This statement from the authors gave reassurance and comfort that there are different degrees in pursuing the sense of democracy, and it is even made possible through the work of craft. Discovering this concept of life is thrilling.

The third, a capelet : The Endurance Of Craftwork

The OTT (over the top) Capelet

*The remains of the jacket from Fuzz from the renewal
of the first shirt*



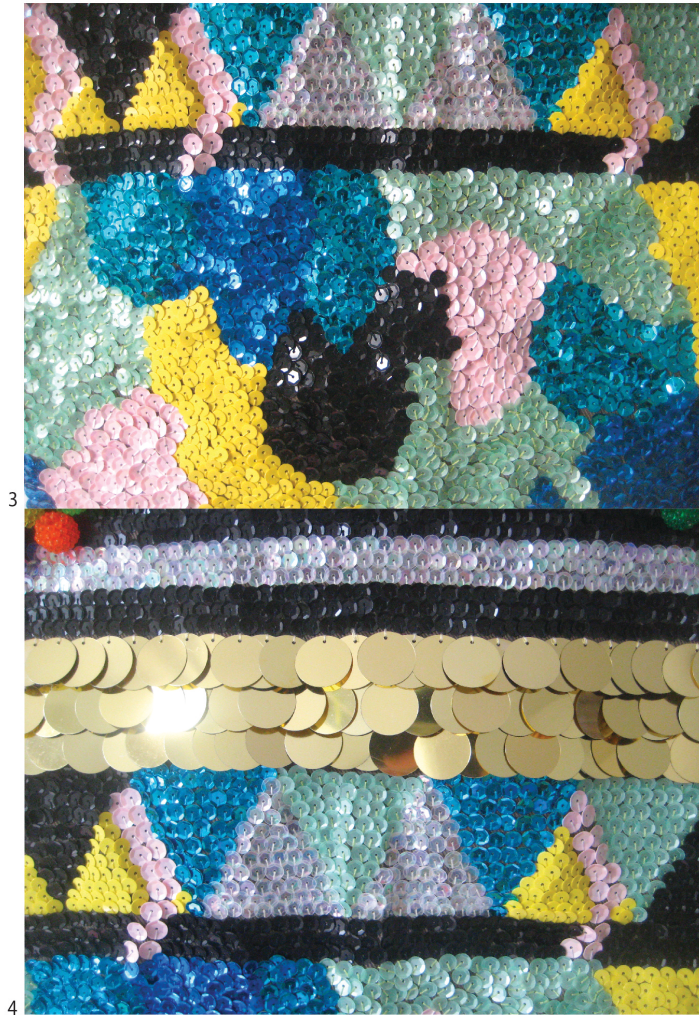


1



2

1 & 2. Beading works in progress with the selective choice of beads and colour coordination



3 & 4. The details of the back is a spontaneous beaded graphics, thus explains the randomness



5



6

5 & 6. The details of the beading works, hand-sewn with different type of beads and sequins

The third, a capelet : The Endurance Of Craftwork

The OTT (over the top) Capelet
Fully-lined and beaded



The Relic: The wood, the rock

The wood and rock with gold were the created relics (as a props) for the photo shoot. I find them suitable because nature has contributed a major part in the thinking process even though they might be visible, shown or realised directly onto the renewed garments. The use of gold was meant to clash with the natural texture of wood and rock. The relics will be given to Fuzz as I thought these are most suitable based on intuition throughout our conversations.

8.5 The analysis and conclusion

The renew-old processes were executed in three different approaches. As told by one of the interviewee, Miyu, she explained that wearing vintage clothing is almost like wearing a piece of art, and I suppose that is the reason for her to scout for used vintage clothing from time to time. I have been keeping this in mind as I thought it is interesting how someone like Miyu feels about wearing a piece of art-like clothing, and as a reason to do second hand clothes shopping. Nevertheless, having been trained as an artist in my earlier education, I am doubtful about certain works proclaimed as art because in the contemporary art scene, it seems that anything could become 'art' as long as it is supported by a bombastic and superfluous texts as art concept. However, deep in my heart I also know that it is unfair to give such a rash conclusion to all contemporary art. As I have my own realisations about it, the first approach of turning the used clothing into 'art' has become a form of self-criticism and self-deprecation while exploring and realising this possibility.

In the second piece of renewed shirt, there was a combination of used and new materials as it was rather tedious and ran into 'inevitable' circumstances to achieve what I have envisioned for the outcome of this 'new' shirt. Nevertheless, I am not really disappointed or pessimistic that the 'criteria' of using used clothing has not been fulfilled because there were no preset criteria in the first place. Renew-old is still a proposal, it could be a useful method, or meaningless too, in this standpoint of reducing fashion consumption. However, I do think that it would be nicer to not have new materials included in the workings.

The OTT Capelet is just like the name has suggested, it is outrageous and elaborate to the extent that it is 'maximalist'. The design of the sequin-work was semi planned as the colour coordination and the general design aesthetic were contemplated but the details during beading were more

spontaneous and intuitive. The beading process required a lot of patience, as the movement was repetitive accompanied by the long hours of sitting. Nonetheless, it was also a therapeutic process because it was brainless work, which is almost similar to sewing and knitting. I have spent about three entire weeks working day and night on this piece.

I would think that the process of renewing-old involves redesign⁵, which was mentioned in the earlier chapters, as well as repair⁶ and reconditioning⁷. Repair and reconditioning are not new terms or ideas, but folks have practiced them for the past few generations. Fixing buttons, seams or holes on the garments at home is the practice of repairing. It is economical. Nonetheless, the 'objective' of repairing might be less driven by the financial reason nowadays but more of ethical preference and a way of living. Furthermore, the act of repairing is also being seen as a substantial creative process stylised by magazine such as *Bust* in the reworking of T-shirts and sweaters. (Fletcher & Grose, 2011, p.101.)

Overall, I am still satisfied with the outcome, even though I wish that no 'external' materials⁸ were involved. Nevertheless, the overall aesthetic would be affected without them, which I cannot compromise as well. The photography for the pieces was as crucial as the actual renewing works themselves, as the art direction of the photography could shape and determine the aesthetic of it. It is also part of the framing. The aim of renewing-old at the very beginning was to add value onto garments in order to create emotional bonding, thus extending the life span of the garment. However, as my thoughts progressed along with the writing, researching and making, I realised this could have been solely an idealism, it is nothing but a hypothesis because the life span of a product does not necessarily prolong due to the amount of so-called value.

At the end of this working process, I reflected on the initial photography art direction and I thought it has evolved as well, which has moved from the 'darker' side of the shaman, to a more colourful, inter-celestial sort of shaman.

I would like to make this renew-old as a philosophy behind my practice of art and design. I reckon I have always been liking, or even subconsciously using this method in my previous works, and now this inclination of 'interest' is getting more prominent. Therefore, I am definitely going to continue this exploration of renewing-old, making do, improvising, and continuing with my usual way of experimenting with found objects.

Endnotes:

1. The original cut of the garment also determines the renew outcome, as the workings of deconstruction are also based on the initial cutting line to remain certain structuring line of the garment.
2. In this context, non-wearable means not a ready to wear.
3. The official online definition of wearable art from Wikipedia refers to “individually designed pieces of (usually) handmade clothing or jewellery created as fine or expressive art.”
4. As the goal of the experimentation for this particular piece is a playful one, all ‘consequences’ could be forgiven. The consequences for this instance mean the utility, wearability, outlook and so on.
5. The official definition of re-design according to an online dictionary means, “To make a revision in the appearance or function of.” (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>)
6. From the online dictionary, ‘repair’ means ‘to restore or renew by any process of making good’. (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/repair>)
7. According to an online source, ‘recondition’ means ‘to restore to good condition, especially by repairing, renovating, or rebuilding.’
8. ‘External’ materials are referring to the pieces for the renewing garment that are not part of the used clothing.

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Appendix

The Design Brief, the Questionnaires

- 1) Why did you give away/discard these garments?
- 2) How long have you been wearing them?
- 3) Why did you buy them?
- 4) Do you feel attached to these garments?
- 5) Do you have any garment which is inseparable from you?
- 6) What is the life span of your oldest garment? Do you still wear them often?
- 7) Would you wear garment that is imperfect (for example: tiny holes bitten by cockroaches, crumpled, stained) Why and why not?
- 8) What would you avoid when you buy a piece of garment? (for example: too trendy, too loud, too retro, too expensive, too cheap, too common...)
- 9) What is your opinion about the aesthetic of a worn out/used garments, in terms of the materials, and style?
- 10) Would you keep your old garments that you have discarded of, if they have been renewed?
- 11) If the garment (the wearable) has been turned into a form of (un)wearable sculpture, would you still like to keep them, although you have disowned them?
- 12) What is your favourite colour(s)?
- 13) What shape(s) do you like?
- 14) Do you like animal/pet? What/who are they?
- 15) How does your favourite fruit looks like?
- 16) What kind of feeling you would like a piece of music to evoke?
- 17) Can you write down a poem, short prose or quote that you have read before and liked it?
- 18) Any favourite book?
- 19) Can you describe your favourite smell?
- 20) Do you have any favourite surface/ tactile on object? For example: the corner of a folded paper (the sharp edges), the moss, the brushes on a ten-year old tooth brush...)
- 21) What is your favourite childhood story, if any?
- 22) What (or who) you would like to turn into when you were young, and now? (For example: a frog, so that you can kiss the princess, or a pair of shoes, so that you always get foot massage...)
- 23) Day or night?
- 24) Light or shadow?
- 25) Leaf or flower?
- 26) Rain or snow?
- 27) Sea or river?

Platform21's Repair Manifesto

1. Make your products live longer!

Repairing means taking the opportunity to give your product a second life. Don't ditch it, stitch it! Don't end it, mend it! Repairing is not anti-consumption. It is anti-needlessly throwing things away.

2. Things should be designed so that they can be repaired.

Product designers: Make your products repairable. Share clear, understandable information about DIY repairs.

Consumers: Buy things you know can be repaired, or else find out why they don't exist. Be critical and inquisitive.

3. Repair is not replacement.

Replacement is throwing away the broken bit. This is NOT the kind of repair that we're talking about.

4. What doesn't kill it makes it stronger.

Every time we repair something, we add to its potential, its history, its soul and its inherent beauty.

5. Repairing is a creative challenge.

Making repairs is good for the imagination. Using new techniques, tools and materials ushers in possibility rather than dead ends.

6. Repair survives fashion.

Repair is not about styling or trends. There are no due-dates for repairable items.

7. To repair is to discover.

As you fix objects, you'll learn amazing things about how they actually work. Or don't work.

8. Repair – even in good times!

If you think this manifesto has to do with the recession, forget it. This isn't about money, it's about a mentality.

9. Repaired things are unique.

Even fakes become originals when you repair them.

10. Repairing is about independence.

Don't be a slave to technology – be its master. If it's broken, fix it and make it better. And if you're a master, empower others.

11. You can repair anything, even a plastic bag.

But we'd recommend getting a bag that will last longer, and then repairing it if necessary.

Stop Recycling. Start Repairing.

www.platform21.nl